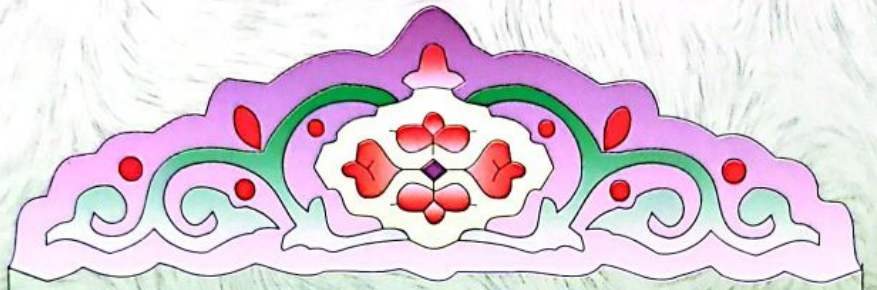
THE TRUTH ABOUT *BAIÁH*



Oath of Allegiance

Original in Urdu by
Dr. Muhammad Ismail Memon Madani

English Translation by
Dr. Muhammad Sadiq

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ان الذين يبايعونك انما يبايعون اللّٰه

بیعت کی حقیقت

The Truth about Baiáh

(Oath of Allegiance)

Original in Urdu by

Dr. Muhammad Ismail Memon Madani

English Translation by

Dr. Muhammad Sadiq

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Translator's Notes

There have been a lot of questions, misconceptions and misunderstanding about the concept of Baiáh practiced in the Sufi traditions. Although it is not the Sufi traditions where this practice began; it is where it was revived. The practice of taking the Oath of Allegiance (Baiáh) goes all the way back to our beloved Prophet Muhammad (saw), and it has been mentioned in the holy Qur'an as well. But alas! Preoccupied mostly with our material lives and baser needs, we have largely become ignorant of our faith and its teachings. We have forgotten the purpose of our creation and our life on this earth; and if we remember it, we no longer care to fulfill it. We have been so over-powered and controlled by our instincts, impulses and desires that our lives have been largely reduced to those of animals. Consequently, we have largely lost our human qualities and character and, sadly, don't even realize it.

The purpose of taking Baiáh has always been to take an oath before a pious and God-fearing servant of Allah (swt) to fulfill the purpose of our life on this earth – to repent our transgressions, to reform our character, to weaken our impulsiveness and desires, to strengthen our souls, and to live our life according to the commands of our Creator; in short, to regain our humanity. We live in a time and in an environment where there is unrestricted freedom and abundant opportunities to pamper and fulfill our lusts and greed of material things – money, food, sex, music, sports, etc. And, there are few who question a life-style that has become solely preoccupied with satisfying our baser needs.

In this dark age of human decay, there are still a few souls who have dedicated their life to reform the human race, to call humans back to humanity, to invite them to come back to the dignity of being a human, to diagnose and treat their

character flaws, to remove the darkness that has engulfed their hearts and souls, and to encourage them to return to the service of their Creator.

Truth about Baiáh is the English translation of the book *Báit Ki Haqíqat*, written by one such soul, my beloved sheikh Dr. Muhammad Ismail Memon Madani. The book attempts to explain the concept of Baiáh and its purposes in light of the holy Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet (saw), the practices of the *sahabah* and those pious scholars and saints who followed them. It also clears up the confusions, misconceptions and misunderstanding that have crept in over last couple of hundred years in this tradition.

It has been a blessing of Allah (swt) and my good fortune that I was asked to translate the original Urdu book into English by Dr. Ismail. I commenced this project right after the holy month of Ramadhan, 1424h, and Alhamdu-lillah, by the Grace of Allah (swt), it is completed today, the 29th of Dhul-Qa'dha, 1424h. I am grateful to Allah (swt) for His help, mercy and guidance in the completion of this work, and pray that it becomes a source of my salvation on the Day of Judgment.

The translation is in simple English. Urdu and Arabic terminologies are difficult to accurately translate, so they have been incorporated in the translation with a roughly close English translation. A brief pronunciation guide appears on the next page to assist the English readers to be able to read and pronounce the foreign terms accurately.

The translation has been reviewed by the Dr. Ismail, the author of the original book, and a few other English speaking brothers and sisters. Nevertheless, there is always a possibility of mistakes and lack of clarity in places. I would appreciate if the knowledgeable readers would inform me of the

shortcomings, so that they may be corrected in the next print. Jazak-Allah.

Dr. Mohammed Sadiq
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
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February 5, 2004

Pronunciation Guide

â	=	long a vowel as in *ah*
î	=	long i vowel as in *ee* (beed)
û	=	long u wovel as in *oo* (boot)
á	=	Arabic alphabet ع
ấ	=	Arabic alphabet ع + long a vowel
ί	=	Arabic alphabet ع + long i vowel
ú	=	Arabic alphabet ع + long u vowel

بسم الله الرحمٰن الرحيم

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

PREFACE 1

(Revised and Expanded Edition)

الحمد لله الذى كفـــٰى وعلىٰ عباده الذين اصطفـــٰى

Praise and gratitude is for Allah – sufficient for His servants, and peace be upon His chosen servants.

The prevalence of atheistic thinking, ungodliness and rejection of religious doctrines of the West has caused mankind to become totally oblivious to the soul and its spiritual needs. The rise of materialism and the overwhelming preoccupation with satisfying the basal needs and desires have left him with a sightless heart. As a result of having been deprived of high morals and values and a sense of a spiritual being, he is living his life like animals.

> *We indeed created man in the best stature. Then he disgraced himself to the lowest of the low.* (Holy Qur'ân, 95:14-15)

The saddest part of it all is that those who were blessed with the wealth of guidance and the shining light of faith by Allah (swt), have also lost their identity. Blind following of the West has mired them so deep into the mud of sinful living that their own good nature (*fitrah*) has been badly mutilated. Living a life oblivious to and neglectful of Allah's commandments has formed such deep layers of rust on their hearts that they find it difficult to understand even the basic and the most important principles of their faith.

One aspect of the faith, which deals with reforming and developing one's inner and outer character and cleansing the soul, and which is especially criticized these days, is what has been known and preserved by the *ummah*[1] as *Tasawwuf.* In the past, some ignorant people ridiculed it by calling it the opium of the faith – an intoxicant that makes its practitioners avoid the world, live like hermits and evade the reality around them. Others have blamed it for developing selfishness and individualism, and for neglecting the ummah's collective good and reform; whereas, some of the main objectives and responsibilities of the Prophet (saw) were to purify the soul and reform the inner and outer character of his followers.

> *Allah granted a great favor to the believers by sending a messenger from their own people to recite to them Allah's revelations, to purify them of moral defects, to teach them the Book and to give them wisdom.* (3:164)

Some vicious critics dare to claim that the reason why some past reform movements failed, from the time of the Prophet (saw) to this day, was because they habituated people with this intoxicant (i.e., tassawuf). They do not see that even those whom they claim, with the consensus of the ummah, to be the true reformers of high caliber and deep piety, who were chosen by Allah (swt) for wide-spread reform of the ummah, could not have attained this status without purifying themselves from their inner and outer character defects and without cleansing their soul. All of them strived hard to have their disciples and followers engage in the practices of Tassawuf for this purpose. In fact, if one seriously studies their situation, he would find that it was these unmatched pearls of the practices of Tassawuf that earned them the status of being the reformers of such extraordinary caliber.

---

[1] The followers of the Prophet Muhammad (saw)

It is this purification of the inner self and reform of the character defects that have been discussed in this booklet along with an explanation of the purpose of Baiáh, which is being presented these days as something strange and unusual. What is Baiáh? What is its purpose? And, how the Prophet (saw) himself engaged in this practice conscientiously. What should be the attitude of those who make Baiáh with a sheikh so that they may easily attain its objectives?

This booklet was first published in 1987. Since then it has been printed many times from various places in the world; its English translation has been reprinted several times from Pakistan and South Africa. Some sincere friends have been asking me to revise it with additional information on the qualities and pre-requisites of a sheikh. I have been intending to revise and update it for sometime, but was not able to do it any sooner due to my pre-occupation with with other matters. Now, with the mercy of Allah (swt), this is being published with a number of new additional pieces of information on the subject.

As before, my sons Mansoor, Ibrahim and Husain Ahmad[1] have been sharing the workload with me. May Allah (swt) bless and increase their knowledge and practice of Islam. It would be ungrateful of me not to mention and thank my sincere friend Sheikh Abdul Moez[2], who has been very helpful and worked even harder than me in looking up the source material, determining the layout of the topics, and in other details. May Allah (swt) reward him the best of rewards and bless him also with further knowledge and practice of the Deen.

---

[1] Sheikh Mansoor and Sheikh Ibrahim are both *huffâz* and certified *úlama*. Mufti Husain Ahmad is a qualified *hâfiz*, *álim* and a *mufti*. All three of them teach at Darul Uloom Al-Madania.

[2] Sheikh Abdul Moez is an *álim* and a long time disciple of Dr. Ismail. He has been teaching at Darul Uloom Al-Madania for a number of years.

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11 Jamadi I, 1422h
August 1, 2001

بسم الله الرحمٰن الرحيم

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

PREFACE 2

(First Edition)

الحمد لله الذى كفـــٰى وعلىٰ عباده الذين اصطفـــٰى

Praise and gratitude is for Allah – sufficient for His servants, and peace be upon His chosen servants.

In Ramadan 1406h, on May 31st 1986, this humble servant arrived in Canada. I met many people here on various occasions, who asked me different types of questions regarding the Baiáh. At the time, I answered their questions orally; however, I then felt that such answers should be presented briefly in written format, because it would serve a better purpose than oral answers, as details of this subject are found scattered in various books of *Tasawwuf*. In my opinion, it was better to compile these details in a separate booklet. So, with the name of Allah (swt), I began to write it, and by His grace it was compiled and completed in two days. May Allah (swt) make it beneficial for the writer and for those who read it.

Dr. Muhammad Ismail Memon Madani
Shawwal 28, 1407h / June 25, 1987

Chapter 1

Baiáh in Islamic Shariáh

Baiáh is an Arabic word which literally means "to sell". In old Arabic tradition, Baiáh represented an agreement between two men which was demonstrated by holding hands and making mutual promises to uphold the agreement.

Definition of Baiáh

In defining Baiáh, Mufti Muhammad Shafi (ra) writes:

> The word Baiáh in fact means to take a promise for performing some special deed. Its old and customary method, according to the Sunnah of the Prophet (saw), is for the parties to place their hands on top of each other; although it is not compulsory. Once a promise is made to do something, it becomes obligatory on the parties to fulfill it, and breaking it is unlawful. (Ma'ariful Qur'ân)

Evidence of Baiáh from the Holy Qur'ân

The proof of taking Baiáh is abundantly found in the holy Qur'ân and in the noble sayings of our beloved Prophet (saw). The following are two examples from the holy Qur'ân.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَمَن نَّكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنكُثُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَى بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهُ اللَّهَ فَسَيُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Surely those who swear allegiance to you (O Prophet) do but swear allegiance to Allah; the hand of Allah is

above their hands. Therefore whoever breaks (his commitment), breaks it only to the injury of his own soul, and whoever fulfills what he has pledged with Allah, He will grant him a mighty reward. (48:10)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَآءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلَى أَن لاَّ يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَلاَ يَسْرِقْنَ وَلاَ يَزْنِينَ وَلاَ يَقْتُلْنَ أَوْلاَدَهُنَّ وَلاَ يَأْتِينَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَفْتَرِينَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلاَ يَعْصِينَكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

O Prophet! When believing women come to you giving you a pledge that they will not associate anyone with Allah, and will not steal, and will not commit fornication, and will not kill their children, and will not produce any lie that they have devised between their hands and feet, and will not disobey you in what is good; then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them from Allah; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (60:12)

In interpretation of the above verse, Ashraf Ali Thânvî (ra) writes: This verse is clear about the purpose of Baiáh. It renders void a formally made Baiáh where an effort is not made to fulfill the promises.

Mufti Muhammad Shafi (ra) explains that this verse is about a detailed Baiáh with women that included promises to follow the commandments of Shariáh along with the articles of faith and beliefs.

Umaimah (ra) narrated: When I made Baiáh with the Prophet (saw) in the company of few other women, while he was taking our pledge to follow the commandments of shariáh, he also asked us to say, "To the extent of our capabilities and

control[1]". After narrating the hadith, Umaimah (ra) said: This shows that the Prophet's (saw) mercy and kindness on us was more than our own mercy on ourselves. We were willing to give the pledge without any conditions, but he asked us to bind our pledge with this condition so that if we were not able to fulfill our commitment in situations beyond our control, it would not be taken as breaking the promise. (Mazhari)

According to Áisha (ra), as narrated in Bukhari, this Baiáh with women occurred verbally. The parties did not put their hands on top of each other as was the tradition with the Baiáh of men. The Prophet's (saw) hand never touched the hands of any *ghair mahram*[2]. (Mazhari)

It is evident from other narrations that the Baiáh with women did not only occur once after the incident of Hudabiyah, but occurred many times afterwards. Even on the day of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet (saw) after taking Baiáh with men, also took Baiáh with women while he was standing on the hill of Safa. Úmar (ra) was standing at the foothill and repeating the words of the Prophet (saw) to the women who were making the Baiáh at the time. Among the women who participated in this Baiáh was Hind (ra), the wife of Abu Sufyan (ra). She was hiding herself initially due to shyness, but when some details of the condition of Baiáh were mentioned, she felt urged to speak up and asked for clarification. The detail of this incident has been mentioned in *Tafseer Mazhari*.

Evidence of Baiáh from the Ahádith of the Prophet (saw)

Baiáh has also been mentioned amply in ahádith. It is neither possible nor necessary to mention them all in this small booklet, but the following are some examples.

---

[1] فِيمَا اسْتَطَعْتُنَّ وَ أَطَقْتُنَّ

[2] Men or women with whom marriage is or may become permissible.

There is a narration in the "Book of Faith" in Bukhari, narrated by Úbâdah bin As-Sâmit (ra):

أن عبادة بن الصامت رضي الله عنه، وكان شهد بدرا، وهو أحد النقباء ليلة العقبة أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال، وحوله عصابة من أصحابه بايعوني على أن لا تشركوا بالله شيئا، ولا تسرقوا، ولا تزنوا، ولا تقتلوا أولادكم، ولا تأتوا ببهتان تفترونه بين أيديكم وأرجلكم، ولا تعصوا في معروف، فمن وفى منكم فأجره على الله، ومن أصاب من ذلك شيئا فعوقب في الدنيا فهو كفارة له، ومن أصاب من ذلك شيئا ثم ستره الله فهو إلى الله، إن شاء عفا عنه وإن شاء عاقبه فبايعناه على ذلك

Úbâdah bin As-Samit, who took part in the battle of Badr and was one of the Naqîb[1] on the night of Al-Áqabah narrated: Allah's Apostle said while a group of his companions were around him, "Swear allegiance to me that you will not associate anything with Allah, will not steal, will not commit illegal sexual intercourse, will not kill your children, will not accuse an innocent person, and will not be disobedient (when asked) to do good deed." The Prophet (saw) added: "Whoever among you fulfills his pledge will be rewarded by Allah and whoever becomes involved in any one of them and gets punished in this world, that punishment will be a redemption for his sin. And if Allah conceals his sin, it is up to Him to forgive or punish him later." So we swore allegiance to him on these points. (Bukhârî)

[1] A person leading a group of six persons

Obviously, this was neither a Baiáh for Islam nor for Jihâd. It is the same Baiáh that is traditionally taken in *Tasawwuf* for fulfilling the commandments of Islam.

In another hadîth, we find:

عن عوف بن مالك الأشجعي. قال: كنا عند رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم تسعة أو ثمانية أو سبعة فقال ألا تبايعون رسول الله ؟ فبسطنا أيدينا وقلنا فعلام نبايعك يا رسول الله ؟ قال على أن تعبدوا الله ولا تشركوا به شيئا و تصلوا الصلوات الخمس وتسمعوا تطيعوا وأسر كلمة خفية ولا تسألوا الناس شيئا فلقد رأيت بعض أولئك النفر يسقط سوط أحدهم. فما يسأل أحدا يناوله إياه

Âuf bin Malik Ashjaî (ra) narrated: Nine, eight or seven of us were with the Prophet (saw). The Prophet (saw) said: Don't you want to make Baiáh with the Prophet of Allah? We extended our hands to him and asked: For what should we make Baiáh with you O Prophet of Allah? He said: For worshipping Allah, for not associating anything with Him, for performing the five salah, for listening and obeying (Allah's commandments), (then he lowered his voice and said) and for not asking others for anything. (The narrator said) I saw some of these people (who took the Baiáh), when they dropped their whip (while riding) they would not ask anyone to pick it up for them. (Muslim, Abu Dawûd, Nasâî)

Baiáh of Sufîs is not Bidáh[1]

In interpretation of the above hadîth, Shrikh Ashraf Ali Thânvî (ra) writes:

---

[1] Invention in the religion

> The Baiáh in *Tasawwuf* is essentially an agreement to be mindful of one's outer and inner behaviour, and is known in sufi tradition as the Baiáh of *Tarîqat*. Some of those who understand the faith only superficially consider this type of Baiáh a Bidáh, because they claim that such Baiáh is not evident in the tradition of the Prophet (saw) and that the Prophet (saw) only use to take Baiáh from people on the occasions of accepting Islam or when going out for Jihâd. This hadîth contains clear proof for such Baiáh, because the Baiáh mentioned in this hadîth was made with the *sahabah*[1] who were already Muslims and, therefore, there would be no need to make Baiáh again with them for accepting Islam. And, obviously it was not a Baiáh for Jihad. From the wording of the hadîth, the Baiáh was made clearly for being mindful of the deeds.

Afterwards, Sheikh Ashraf Ali Thânvî (ra) quotes the hadîth narrated by Úbâdah bin As-Samit (ra) and writes in its explanation:

> It is evident from this hadîth that the people who the Prophet (saw) asked to make Baiáh were *Sahabah*. This is clear proof that even in those days Baiáh used to be made for being mindful of one's deeds besides on the occasions of entering Islam and for Jihad.

My beloved Sheikh Zakariya (ra), elaborating on the interpretation of the above two ahadîth, writes:

> It is also evident from these two ahadîth that a sheikh may ask someone to make Baiáh with him for some specific reason.

---

[1] The Companions of the Prophet (saw).

Sheikh Muhammad Yusuf Kândhalvî (ra), in his book *Hayâtus Sahabah* under the chapter "Taking Baiáh for following Islamic Principles", has mentioned some more ahadîth.

1. Bashîr bin Khasâsiyah (ra) narrated: I came to the Prophet (saw) to make Baiáh and asked him, "For what purpose are you taking my Baiáh, O Prophet of Allah?" The Prophet (saw) extended both his hands to me and said, "That you give witness that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad (saw) is his servant and a Prophet, that you will offer the five daily prayers on time, that you will pay Zakah, that you will fast in the month of Ramadan, that you will perform Hajj, and that you will go for Jihad in the path of Allah (swt)." I said to him, "O Prophet of Allah! I will do all of these except two – Zakah and Jihâd. I am not capable of paying Zakah because I only have ten camels which are merely sufficient for milk and transportation of my family. I am also not capable of going for Jihâd, because I am weak-hearted and I have heard that one who runs away from the battlefield will be severely punished by Allah (swt). I am afraid that if I go for Jihâd and end up running away from the battlefield for the fear of death, I may suffer from the wrath of Allah (swt)." The Prophet (saw) withdrew his hands and said, "O Bashir! How would you enter paradise if you do not pay Zakah and go for Jihâd." So I said to him, "Fine, O Prophet of Allah, give me your hands I will make Baiáh with you on all these matters." (Tabrâni, Abu Nuáim, Hâkim, Baihaqî)

2. Jarîr (ra) narrated, "I made Baiáh with the Prophet (saw) on establishing Salah, paying Zakah, and wishing well for all Muslims." (Bukhârî, Muslim, Ahmad, Ibn Jarîr, Tirmidhi)

In another narration of this hadîth, the Prophet (saw) has been reported as saying, "Give me your hands, O Jarîr." "What for O Prophet of Allah?," he asked. The Prophet (saw) responded, "To make Baiáh with me for obeying Allah (swt) and to wish every Muslim well." Jarîr listened to the Prophet (saw) carefully and, being a very wise man, said, "To the extent of my capability, O Prophet of Allah." This last statement of Jarîr (ra) removed the obligation to fulfill these promises under all conditions. (Kanzul Úmmal)

Abu Umamah (ra) narrated: The Prophet (saw) said, "Is there any one who would make Baiáh with me?" Thaubân (ra) responded, "Take Baiáh from us, O Prophet of Allah." The Prophet (saw) took Baiáh from Thaubân (ra) for not asking anyone for anything. He asked, "What would be the reward for such a person." The Prophet (saw) responded, "The paradise." Thaubân (ra) then made Baiáh with the Prophet (saw). Abu Umamah (ra) said, "I saw Thaubân afterwards in a large crowd. When he accidentally dropped his whip and sometime it fell on someone's shoulder who would pick it up and give it to him, but he would not take it. He would dismount his horse to pick it up."

In another hadîth narrated by Abu Zar (ra) and reported through a number of narrators, Abu Zar said: The Prophet (saw) took Baiáh with me on five occasions for not fearing condemnation from anyone on following the commandments of Allah (swt).

In one hadîth, the Prophet (saw) has been reported to have said to Abu Zar (ra), "Wait for six days; on the seventh day I will tell you something which you should understand carefully." On the seventh day, he said to Abu Zar, "I admonish you to fear accountability before Allah (swt) whether you are alone or in a crowd; if you transgress, follow it up immediately with a good deed; don't ask anyone for anything even if

you accidentally drop your whip while riding; and do not accept to keep anything in trust from anyone." (Ahmad)

Classification of Baiáh

The Prophet (saw) had taken Baiáh for different things on different occasions. For example, at the time of accepting Islam, for implementing the principles of Islam completely in one's life, and at time, for doing some particular deeds or abstaining from some sins. Thus, there are a number of categories of Baiáh.

Baiáh for Islam (*Baiáti Islam*)
When an infidel or a polytheist discards his previous convictions, seeks repentance and makes a covenant to accept Islam, it is called Baiáh for Islam.

Baiáh for Jihad (*Baiáti Jihad*)
This is taken on the occasion of Jihad, like was done at the time of Baiti Ridwân in Hudaibiyah, when the Prophet (saw) had taken Baiáh from the *Sahabah* that if there would be a battle against the enemies, they would not desert the battlefield and would fight the enemy until the end.

Baiáh for Caliphate (*Baiáti Khilâfat*)
This is the Oath of Allegiance taken on the occasion of accepting a person as a ruler over Muslims as it occurred after the demise of the Prophet (saw). The *Sahabah* unanimously accepted Abu Bakr Siddîq (ra) as their Caliph and gave their Oath of Allegiance to him, and thus this system continued. Even now this system is in place in Saudi Arabia.

Baiáh against committing major sins (*Baiáti Taubah*)
This is the same Baiáh as has been mentioned above in the second reference from the holy Qur'ân (60:12). There are many incidents in the ahadîth about the Prophet (saw) taking

Baiáh from men and women for not committing various sins, and at times with women for not making *nauhah*[1].

Baiáh for performing good deeds (*Baiáti Tarîqat*)

As is evident from the ahadîth mentioned earlier, this type of Baiáh, known as *Baiáti Tarîqat*, has been practiced since the time of the Prophet (saw) continually through to the present time. This has been called *Tazkiyah*[2] in the holy Qur'ân and *Ihsân*[3] in the hadîth as has been mentioned in the *hadîth Jibraîl*[4]. Later, it came to be known as *Tasawwuf*, and this is also the objective of what is called *Pîrî-Murîdî*[5]. *Tazkiyah* is one of the four major tasks that were among the responsibilities of the Prophet (saw) and these have been mentioned in the holy Qur'ân in four different places. Allah (swt) says:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولاً مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلاَلٍ مُّبِينٍ

He it is Who raised among the unlettered a messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His revelations, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, although they were certainly in clear error before. (62:2)

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[1] To cry and mourn aloud, shouting and tearing clothes upon someone's death. This was the customary way to grieve deaths before Islam.

[2] Purification of Nafs

[3] To worship Allah (swt) as if you were in His presence, or in the least with the knowledge that He is forever watching you.

[4] The hadîth which relates the incident when Angle Jibra'îl came to the Prophet (saw) in human form in the presence of the companions to ask him questions about Islam.

[5] Urdu language terminology for the relationship of allegiance between a sheikh and his disciple.

Baiáh in *Tasawwuf* is in accordance with Sunnah

Certainly, something that the Prophet (saw) practiced conscientiously as a part of faith can not be called against the Sunnah.

This *Baiáti Tarîqat* was discontinued during the time of monarchy[1] for the fear that it might be seen as Baiáh for Caliphate and, therefore, perceived as rebellion against the ruling monarch, causing unnecessary problems for people. Later, when the custom of taking Baiáh for swearing allegiance to the ruling monarch was discontinued, the sufis took the opportunity to go back to the traditional *Baiáti Tarîqat*.

Shah Wali-ullah (ra), who was a great saintly scholar and reformer of his time, writes in his book *Al-qaulul Jamîl*:

> The practice of Baiáh among the sufîs has been for many purposes. The first of these is sought for the purpose of repentance from sins; it is known as *Baiáti Taubah*. The second, for receiving the blessings of pious and righteous people by entering their fold; this is known as *Baiáti Tabarruk*. And the third, for the purpose of reforming oneself by making a firm intention to give up all open and hidden sinful activities, to live by the divine commands of Allah (swt) and to sincerely seek His pleasure and closeness. This is known as *Baiáti Ázîmat*.
>
> The first two of these Baiáhs are, therefore, meant to give up major sins and not to persist in the minor

[1] After the fourth Caliph, the system of caliphate turned into monarchy. Instead of selecting the Caliph from among the pious people through the counsel of elders, the ruling class made it a right of their immediate family; and after a next monarch was announced, people were required to swear the Oath of Allegiance (i.e., make Baiáh) on the hand of the new king.

ones, as well as to diligently perform the obligatory worship along with *wâjibât* and *sunnah muakkidah*. Not practicing these things or practicing them inconsistently would break the allegiance.

The third Baiáh involves special practices to help give up a sinful life and to acquire consistency in living according to the will and commands of Allah. These special methods and practices are continued until the heart is enlightened with tranquility and one instinctually begins to obey Allah's commands in all walks of life consistently and without much struggle.

Once this state is reached, he is given permission to make use of and benefit from some permissible worldly enjoyments that are difficult to give up for long. Inconsistency in fulfilling the requirements of this type of Baiáh results in the premature loss of enlightenment from the heart before the objectives are achieved.

Chapter 2

The Need for Baiáh

Man is composed of two things – the body and the soul. There are ways and means of maintaining both of them in a healthy state. As food is necessary for the health and maintenance of the body, similarly obedience and remembrance of Allah is required for the sustenance of the soul. As there are diseases of the body, similarly there are spiritual diseases, which are called the diseases of the heart, such as pride, vanity, conceit, hypocrisy, jealousy, hatred, love of wealth, love of fame and glory. If medical treatment is not sought for diseases of the body, it would lead to the weakness of the body and its eventual death. Similarly, if spiritual ailments are not treated, it will lead to a spiritual death. The death of the heart and the soul is more dangerous than the physical death. Strong emphasis has been placed in the holy Qur'an and the ahadîth on the maintenance and well-being of the heart, and stern warnings have been given about the diseases of the heart and its death. Therefore, Allah (swt) says:

فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللّهُ مَرَضاً

In their hearts is a disease and Allah increases their disease (2:10)

In Surah 22, Allah says:

فَإِنَّهَا لاَ تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

For indeed it is not the eyes that go blind, but it is the hearts within the bosoms that go blind. (22:46)

And in Surah 26, we find:

يَوْمَ لاَ يَنفَعُ مَالٌ وَلاَ بَنُونَ ه إِلاَّ مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

The day (when for your salvation) neither wealth will be of any use nor children, but (that one will achieve salvation) who will bring before Allah, a pure heart. (26:88-89)

In one hadîth, the following supplication of the Prophet (saw) has been quoted:

اَللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ لِى مَسَامِعَ قَلْبِىْ لِذِكْرِكَ

O Allah! Open the pores of my heart for your remembrance.

In another hadîth, the Prophet (saw) has stated:

أَلاَ وَإِنَّ فِى الْجَسَدِ مُضْغَةً، إِذَا صَلُحَتْ صَلَحَ الْجَسَدَ كُلُّهُ وَإِذَا فَسَدَتْ، فَسَدَ الْجَسَدَ كُلُّهُ، أَلاَ وَهِيَ الْقَلْب

Truly in the body there is a piece of flesh, when it is sound, the whole body is sound, when it is diseased, the whole body is diseased. Truly it is the heart." (Bukhârî, Muslim).

Difference between Physical and Spiritual Diseases

The main difference between physical and spiritual diseases is that physical diseases become apparent, such as a fever, headache, stomach pain, etc., but spiritual diseases often go unnoticed. Therefore, no attention is paid to their treatment. A spiritual healer, a sheikh, is required, in order to properly diagnose the disease and suggest effective treatment strate-

gies. Many different diseases of the heart, their ill-effects and warnings have been mentioned in the holy Qur'an and Ahadîth. For example, a man with a mustard seed's worth of arrogance in his heart will never be able to smell even the fragrance of paradise, or that good deeds are not accepted because of hypocrisy, which has also been called minor polytheism. Regarding jealousy, it has been said that jealousy destroys good deeds as fire destroys wood, or that a person who harbors hatred in his heart for others is not forgiven even in the night of *Shabbi Bara'at*[1]. Other diseases of the heart have also been similarly mentioned. It is, therefore, necessary to look for a sheikh who may properly diagnose and treat such spiritual diseases.

Baiáh is a Commitment to Seek Treatment

An analogy of making Baiáh in dealing with the physical diseases may be that of a person who has been suffering from a long standing illness or many diseases concurrently. To save his health and life, he would likely put aside all of his other priorities and would search for and go to a good doctor who may diagnose his illness, inform him of the nature and severity of the disease and the risks to his health and life. The doctor would inform him of the treatment and how long would it take to cure the disease. He would also seek a commitment from the patient to follow the treatment regime conscientiously, take the medications as prescribed, stay away from certain types of food and activities, and keep him informed of the progress every two weeks. If the patient agrees to all of this and makes a commitment with the doctor, he has made a Baiáh – an agreement, with the doctor to follow his orders and prescriptions. If he now sincerely follows the doctor's orders sincerely, Allah (swt), in His mercy, would cure him of the diseases.

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[1] The 15th night of the month of Shábân, which is known as one of those special times when Allah (swt) forgives people who repent.

Similarly, it is necessary to go to a spiritual doctor, a sheikh, for the diagnosis and treatment of spiritual diseases. One has to then follow his prescribed activities and stay away from others, and report any progress back to him from time to time. This is what is known as Baiáh or becoming a disciple in the way of sufis. Now, if the patient or disciple would sincerely fulfill the conditions of his allegiance with his sheikh, Allah (swt) would bless him with spiritual health and include him among his loyal and privileged servants.

One important aspect in the treatment of spiritual diseases is to stay with the sheikh for a sufficient amount of time. This is like a patient with a serious physical disease who needs to stay in a hospital for some time to ensure the safety of his health and to get him used to the routines of the treatment regimen. However, if it is not possible for any reason, it is important to keep the sheikh informed of his condition and progress through correspondence from time to time.

There is no set time for the treatment of these diseases. The more diligent the patient is in obeying and respecting his sheikh, the quicker he will improve, and the more careless he is in following his sheikh's advice, the longer it will take. Staying in the company of the sheikh is considered very effective in quick recovery.

Often people think that following this path is very difficult. It is very difficult, they say, to become a close and privileged servant of Allah (swt). This is nothing but a deception of Shaitân, through which he keeps people away from the path of Allah (swt). It is obligatory on all Muslims to be rid of these spiritual diseases. How can something that is required by Allah (swt) be unachievable? In the past, people were strong and thus were capable of and were put through rigorous treatment regimen before they recovered. These days, we have become physically and spiritually week; so Allah

(swt), in his Mercy, has made this path of recovery easier for us. Sufi Muhammad Iqbal, in his book *Muhabbat*[1], writes:

> These days we have become physically and spiritually weak, we have lost our courage; and the Day of Judgment is drawing close. Allah (swt), therefore, accepts even little efforts and grants success as has been mentioned in one hadîth. The Prophet (saw) said, "The one who will do a tenth of a good deed (in later times) will get the reward of fifty companions (of the Prophet) who performed the same deed."
>
> Similiarly, nowadays the way to reach Allah (swt) has also become as easy as it is to reach the house of Allah (swt). Before, in order to reach Makkah, the pilgrims used to travel by foot or on camels for months or even years, whereas, now it takes only a few hours to complete the same journey from any corner of the world. The only requirements are that the passengers be in a condition to travel, have the fair, traveling documents, etc., and that the conveyance be moving in the right direction. Without satisfying these conditions, or if he is moving in the opposite direction, the traveler will never reach the destination even if he is shouting Makkah, Makkah at the top of his voice. The relative ease of reaching Makkah implies that the seeker of this path will also not have to undergo any ordeals and tasks beyond his capacity and endurance. The time required to cover this treatment has been condensed due to diminished life spans. So instead of many years, four months are sufficient. And at times, even forty days or less are enough to reach the goal.

[1] 'The Achievement of Love' is the English translation of this booklet.

The True Nature of Baiáh

The purposes of Baiáh, the characteristics of a sheikh, and the etiquettes of the disciple have been frequently mentioned in the writings of Sheikh Ashraf Ali Thânvî (ra). For the benefit of the reader, the following are some excerpts from his books in his own words.

> The gist of Baiáh and the allegiance between a sheikh and his disciples is that the sheikh promises to teach the commands of Allah (swt) and how to practice remembrance of Him, and the disciple promises to obey and follow the sheikh's advice and prescriptions. Although the sheikh may teach and the disciple may follow without formally entering into a Baiáh, the benefit of making Baiáh is that it forges a special bond between the sheikh and the disciple whereby the sheikh gives special attention to the disciple and the disciple becomes more diligent in obeying the sheikh's advice. This is why it is said that the disciple should make Baiáh with only one sheikh and consider him the best of his time so that the bond of their relationship remains strong and its effects may be sustained, which is essential for the disciple's progress. The reason for holding hands while making Baiáh, or in case of a woman to have her hold one end of a piece of cloth, is only a tradition that goes back to the practice of the Prophet (saw). Otherwise, Baiáh may also be made without this tradition so that someone may make a Baiáh from a distance also. However, to follow the tradition of the Prophet (saw) is better and he used to hold hands while taking the oath of allegiance. Holding on to a piece of cloth that is held by the sheikh at one end also signifies the

same tradition and is merely in place of holding hands[1]. (Tashîli Qasdus Sabîl)

In another book, Sheikh Thânvî (ra) writes:

> The true purpose of Baiáh becomes clear even from looking at the literal meanings of the words disciple and reform. However, a mere intention and a desire to reform in itself is not sufficient for this purpose. It is necessary to find the appropriate resources and to begin the journey towards the intended destination. So, technically a disciple is one who has a made a firm determination to reform his inner and outer character to bring it in line with the requirements of faith, looks for the appropriate resources, and begins to strive towards his goal. Baiáh then signifies forming an alliance for this purpose with someone who is more knowledgeable and experienced in this path, and who is capable of properly and efficiently guiding him to his destination while protecting him from the dangers of the path. The disciple places himself in the experienced hands of the guide as a sick person would place himself in the care of an experienced doctor; and then he totally follows his orders with respect to the medications and precautions. (Tassawuf wa Sulûk)

Exaggerations in the Concept of Baiáh

The truth about the necessity of Baiáh, the need for a sheikh and becoming a disciple, have either been grossly overstated or understated. On one hand, it has been labeled as a *Bidáh*[2] and on the other, it has been reduced to a mere tradition of

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[1] A cloth is used instead of holding hands in case of a woman, or when many men are making Baiáh at one time.

[2] An innovation in religion

kissing the hands and feet of a sheikh in order to receive his blessings without realizing the necessity of making an effort to change oneself. There is nothing to be gained by entering into it as a mere tradition. The main thing is to make an effort and begin to move forward under the direction of a guide, even if there is no formal allegiance made with the guide. Not that there are no blessings in entering into a *silsila*[1], but to think of it as the main objective is a mistake. The main objective of making a Baiáh and entering into a silsila is to achieve the pleasure of Allah (swt), which only results from fulfilling the commands of Shariáh and dutifully making *zikr*[2]. This is what the sheikh teaches and encourages, and the disciple dutifully follows. Even if the disciple does not notice any unusual state or ability, he will receive the pleasure of Allah (swt), which will bring him, on the Day of Judgment, salvation from hell, entry into paradise and therein the opportunity to see Allah (swt). The essence of Baiáh is the promise by a sheikh to diagnose, teach and prescribe a course of treatment, along with the promise by the disciple to obey and follow the prescribed treatment regimen.

One needs a teacher to properly learn even the simple requirements and practices of the faith. Understandably then there would be even a greater need for a teacher in learning and implementing the inner and hidden practices of the faith, which also includes obligatory, prohibited, desirable and undesirable deeds that are explained and dealt with in *Tasawwuf*. Such a teacher is called a '*Sheikh*' or '*Murshid*' in sufi terminology.

Understanding one's spiritual pitfalls and weaknesses and treating them effectively is generally not possible without the aid of a sheikh. It is, therefore, necessary to look for a mur-

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[1] A sufi order. There are many sufi orders, but four are well known – Naqshbandiyah, Suharwardiyah, Qadariyah, and Chistiyah.

[2] Remembrance of Allah (swt)

shid and, when one is found, to seek his counsel and follow his teachings conscientiously.

Diagnosis of Spiritual Diseases

Certainly, *Baiáti Tarîqat* is not always needed. However, sometimes there are hidden diseases of the soul that are difficult to recognize without the diagnosis of an experienced sheikh. And if one knows his illnesses, it is difficult to find the appropriate treatment. Even if one discovers the treatment, it is often difficult to implement it because of the push and pull of the baser desires of the *nafs*. This is why a sheikh is sought who may understand and explain the nature of these diseases and then suggest the appropriate treatment and strategies. It is difficult to fully understand one's own condition. The sheikh has the experience, because he has gone through such conditions himself and has seen others making errors and suffering from them. He, therefore, knows the genuine knowledge from the superficial and the right from the wrong. One cannot trust one's own judgment about his condition; it takes a lot of experience and an ability to emotionally detach oneself from his circumstances, which is difficult to achieve. Only someone who has repeatedly experienced and witnessed these conditions may appropriately diagnose the disease. Besides, the sheikh's prescribed treatment is easy, doable and complete, because Allah helps him in this work. There are scores of books on medical ailments and their treatments. If one decides to read these books and treat his own illnesses without any education or training in the medical field, it may put his health and life at great risk. No one treats himself simply by reading medical books, even though they contain all the necessary knowledge and information, and a qualified doctor himself uses them to diagnose and treat. Even if one succeeds in treating some minor conditions through these books, he would be unlikely to diagnose and treat major illnesses.

An incident of Sheikh Thânvî (ra)

Sheikh Ashraf Ali Thânvî (ra) writes:

> I used to suffer from fever every year at the end of the monsoon season. The doctor almost always used to write the same prescription for treatment. I thought perhaps I should write it down and keep using it in the future for whenever I get a fever. So, this is what I did when I got the fever the following year, but it did not do anything – I used the same medication but it did not reduce the fever. I went back to the doctor who gave me a different prescription this time, and told me that there was a further complication in my lungs. I thought even if I write down this new prescription, how would I determine what complications might there be next time and what must be treated first? This can be determined only by an experienced doctor. Indeed, only a qualified and experienced physician may use the medical books properly for diagnosis and treatment.

The bottom line – without beginning the journey and without a proper guide, one is unlikely to find the right path. If a blind person wishes to reach somewhere, he must begin to walk and he must hold the hand of a guide. If he chooses not to walk himself, a thousand guides will not be able to get him to his destination, and if he refuses to hold the hand of his guide, he is likely to stumble over something on the way and fall. The only safe and secure way to reach the destination is for him to walk himself and hold the hand of his guide. The same is true for walking on the path of *Tarîqat* – choose and begin to walk, seek guidance from and hold the hand of an experienced elder.

This is how Allah (swt) has destined the process of learning and growing – no skills and expertise can be developed

without the help of a teacher. So, when one chooses to traverse this path, one should look for a teacher through whose knowledge, experience, and blessings, one may reach his true destination.
The poet says:

If you wish to travel, go with a guide,
For one who traversed the path of Love without one,
Wasted a life-time,
And never became aware of true Love.

Sheikh Rumi says:

Go with a friend on the path of the soul,
Do not plan to go alone,
For you will never be able to cross it on your own.

Chapter 3

Finding the Right Sheikh

When a person is seriously ill and needs to consult a doctor, he carefully searches for him ensuring that the doctor is properly qualified, has lots of experience and is well-known in his field of expertise. Similarly, it is important in the treatment of spiritual diseases that, before making Baiáh, one properly searches for and ensures that the sheikh is capable of performing this important task. Sheikh Thânvî (ra) quotes the following hadîth in this respect.

عن أبي هريرة عن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال المرء على دين خليله فلينظر أحدكم من يخالل

Abu Hurairah (r.a.) narrated: The Prophet (saw) said, "A person adopts the ways of his friends; so be careful who you make friends with." (Abu Dawûd, Tirmidhî)

Obviously there needs to be a close relationship between a sheikh and his disciple. When normal friendships have such strong influence on a person's faith and character, how can a strong and loving relationship between a sheikh and his disciple be devoid of such influence? It is commonly observed that a sheikh's beliefs, actions, and character strongly influences and penetrates into the disciple. Even if he is not able to adopt them completely, he admires them. Hence, if a sheikh's character is weak, his disciple's character would also be weak. Therefore, it is important to be careful in selecting a sheikh. Often, people are heedless in this respect, which needs to be corrected. Since it would be very difficult to determine the appropriateness of a sheikh without any

signs, the following are some necessary and important signs of a capable sheikh.

Signs and Characteristics of a Capable Sheikh

Sheikh Thânvî (ra) writes in his book, *Al-Takasshuf*: Enlightenment and love of Allah (swt) are the characteristics of a capable sheikh; and the traits of the fake are deception and lewdness.

Sheikh Rumi has mentioned the characteristics of a sheikh in detail. According to him, one needs a healthy doctor who is well himself and capable of treating the physical illness of his patient. If he himself is sick, his opinion will also be sick and undependable despite him being a doctor. On the other hand, if he is healthy but inexperienced in treating a certain type of illness, he would be of no use to the patient. Similarly, for spiritual treatment, one needs a sheikh who himself is pious and God-fearing and not involved in sinful activities and innovations in the faith. He should also be capable of reforming others. If he has wrong beliefs and is ill-behaved, one cannot be certain that he would teach his disciples with sincerity. In fact, he may likely attempt to convince the disciples also to hold his wrong beliefs. He will also not be able to admonish the disciple, for he himself does not follow his counsel. Being conscious of his own character flaws, he would shy away from correcting the wrongful behaviors of his disciples. And, if he makes up excuses for his wrongful behavior, there would be even a higher risk of leading the disciples astray. On top of it, his teachings will be devoid of enlightenment and the blessings of Allah (swt). On the other hand, if he is pious and God-fearing, but inexperienced in the matters of spiritual training and treatment, he would still be unable to meet the needs of his disciples.

As there are certain signs and indications of competency for a medical doctor, such as proper education, practical training

for a sufficient time under the supervision of a senior practitioner, patients' trust in him, and testimonies from his patients about their recovery at his hands, etc.; there are similarly signs and indications of a competent and capable spiritual doctor, a sheikh, which are as follows.

1. He has the necessary knowledge of shariáh, either through formal education or through the company of scholars, so that he may protect himself and his disciples from incorrect beliefs and wrongful deeds.
2. His beliefs, character and deeds are in accordance with the shariáh.
3. He prefers life-hereafter to the life of this world, and is consistent in performing his personal and social religious obligations.
4. He does not claim competence for himself, for such claims also reflect a preference for materialism.
5. He has been in the company of pious sheikhs and scholars and has acquired their blessings.
6. He is kind and graceful in teaching and training his disciples, and admonishes them when he hears or sees any objectionable behavior in them instead of letting them do what they please.
7. The condition of people, who have made Baiáh with him, appears very good with respect to following the shariáh and freedom from the greed of materialistic things.
8. He is respected and held in high regard by the fair-minded scholars and sheikhs.
9. He attracts the pious and the wise more than the general public.
10. Being in his company for a few times makes one notice a decrease in the love of the material world and an increase in the love of Allah (swt) within himself.
11. He himself is consistent in the Remembrance of Allah (*zikrullah*) and in making efforts to better himself.
12. He is not only pious himself, but also capable of attracting others towards piety. He is competent in diagnosing

and prescribing treatment for the diseases of heart and soul.

These are the major requirements of a sheikh. If a person meets these criteria, then it is immaterial whether he can perform miracles or bring sudden changes into someone merely with his powerful attention, or that he can read minds or predict the future, because these things are not necessary requirements of a sheikh. Similarly, it is not necessary that people's mental and emotional conditions change rapidly just with the attention of the sheikh. These types of influences are largely psychological in nature. Even non-Muslims can learn and perform them with practice. Besides, such quick influences are temporary by nature and do not have long term effects on a person. A sheikh may sometimes cast such an influence for a short period of time on a hardened disciple whose heart is not capable of accepting the gradual influence of *zikr*; the purpose is to increase his ability to benefit from *zikrullah*.

When should Baiáh be made?

Making Baiáh with a sheikh is not and should not be a sudden emotional decision. In the tradition of the Prophet (saw), it is a mean to strengthen one's relationship with Allah (swt) and to prepare for a better life in hereafter. Therefore, before committing oneself to a sheikh, it is wise to make a thorough search by visiting and attending the gatherings of different sheikhs and scholars. Only when a sheikh measures up to the above-mentioned criteria and one feels naturally attracted to him, should he commit himself to this sheikh in the relationship of Baiáh. Once such a sheikh is found, one should not unnecessarily delay making Baiáh with him.

Sheikh Thaânvî (ra) writes in this regard:

> Keep visiting the known sheikhs and scholars who are thought to be competent and skilful. Do not rush in rejecting them, nor try to find faults in them. First, find out if he is solidly grounded in the commands of shariáh . If not, stay away from him even though he may be performing miracles. (Tálîmud-Deen)

Allah (swt) commands us:

وَ لاَ تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا

> *And obey not the one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance, who follows his own desires and whose affairs have crossed all bounds.* (18:28)

If he is bound by the commands of shariáh, then his piety and closeness to Allah (swt) is evident, but he may still need training and competence; so do not rush into making Baiáh with him. Wait to see if being in his company positively affects your heart, and promotes love of Allah (swt), dislike of the material world, and hate of wrongful behavior. This is what the Prophet (saw) has said:

و اذا رو ذكرالله

> *When you see them, it reminds you of Allah (swt)*

It would be difficult for most people to notice the effects and influence of their company in a few short visits. Therefore, one should ask some of their disciples, who appear to be wise and truthful, about the influence of their sheikh's company, because Allah (swt) says in the holy Qur'ân:

فاسْألُوا أهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إن كُنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُون

If you do not know, ask of those who possess knowledge. (21:7)

And the Prophet (saw) has said:

اِنَّمَا شِفَاءُ الْعَىِّ السُّؤَالُ

The cure for a lack of knowledge is to ask

If a reliable person testifies for the influence of the sheikh's company then trust him; and if many give such testimony then it would almost be certain, especially if such influence is apparent in the disciples' character and lives. Disciples often exaggerate the capabilities and influence of their sheikh. Ensure that these disciples are not doing so.

Another way, if one cannot personally visit, is to correspond with the potential sheikh for some time. Inform him of your situation and seek his advice. If he chooses to give counsel, then follow it to determine if it helps. If his advice is consistently helpful, make a request for Baiáh; then accept whatever he suggests.

All the signs and requirements of the sheikh, selection of a sheikh and the sheikh's acceptance of the disciple that have been mentioned so far, have been taken from the writings of Sheikh Ashraf Ali Thânvî (ra), who made this whole process much simpler and easier to follow. Previously, it took a lot more effort and much harder work. My beloved sheikh Zakariya (ra) wrote about it in his book, *Sharîát wa Tarîqat kâ Talâzum.* After mentioning in detail the conditions of a sheikh and Baiáh described by Shah Wali-ullah (ra), he writes:

The conditions mentioned by Shah Wali-ullah (ra) are harder than those mentioned by Sheikh Thânvî (ra). Sheikhs before Shah Wali-ullah (ra) were even more strict in this regard; they used to put their disciples through rigorous training to cleanse them of their spiritual ailments before giving them a clean bill of health. Many well-known incidents of such rigorous training have been mentioned in the history of this work. One very famous story is that of Shah Abu Sáîd Gangohî (ra).

The Story of Shah Abu Sáîd Gangohî (ra)

Sheikh Abdul Quddûs Gangohî (ra) had been one of the great sufi sheikhs of Gangoh, India. He is held in high regard among the sufis of Chistiya branch. He had a grandson by the name of Abu Sáîd. As long as the grand father was alive, Abu Sáîd did not benefit from his teachings, training and blessings. People came from far away to Gangoh to seek treatment for their character disorders and spiritual ailments, but Abu Sáîd continued to be vain in the mere fact that he was the grandson of the sheikh; and, therefore, remained heedless of reforming his own character and benefiting from his grandfather's knowledge, skills, and blessings. When the grandfather passed away, he realized his loss. People came from all over to his grandfather to learn and to improve themselves, but he did not avail the opportunity; he remained in darkness under the light. Now, he began to think what could he do? How could he make up for such a great loss? A thought occurred to him that perhaps he should consult with the disciples who benefited from his grandfather, received his blessings, and who might now be representing his work elsewhere by assisting others in their reform. He began to inquire as to which of his grandfather's disciple was better known in the field of diagnosis and treatment of spiritual diseases. He found out that there was a

very highly regarded disciple of his grandfather in Balakh[1] by the name of Sheikh Nizamuddin Balakhi (ra). There was a time when such a treasure was in his own home, but he did not benefit from it. And now it was in Balakh, a long journey from Gangoh. But, since Abu Sáîd was now serious and sincere about improving his own condition, he undertook the journey to Balakh to visit Sheikh Nizamuddin Balakhi (ra).

When Sheikh Nizamuddin Balakhi (ra) heard about the coming of his sheikh's grandson from Gangoh, he went outside of the city limit to receive and welcome him, and treated him with a reception fit for kings. He brought him to his house, spread new carpets, arranged for high quality accommodation for him, and treated him with delicious cuisines and parties.

After a few days went by, Abu Sáîd said to Sheikh Nizamuddin (ra), "You have shown me much kindness, dear sir, and you have treated me with great respect, but, in fact, I had come here for a completely different purpose." The sheikh asked, "What purpose?" "I came here to take some of that treasure back with me that you brought from my grandfather," he replied. The sheikh said, "Oh! So you have come to take that wealth back, have you?" "Yes sir," he replied. "Well then, off with the great food, carpets, luxurious living, and parties," the sheikh said. "What shall I do then?", asked Abu Sáîd. The sheikh replied, "Go live in the wash area of the masjid and keep the fire under the water going, so that worshippers have hot water for ablution. That is all you would do. No Baiáh, no *zikr*, no meditation, no special routines." "Where would I sleep?" he inquired. "By the wash area," replied the sheikh. So, all the royal treatment was gone for Abu Sáîd – tasty cuisines, receptions and parties, luxuriously carpeted accommodation, all gone. Instead he

[1] A town in Iran

was assigned the duty in the wash area to keep throwing wood in the fire.

Some weeks passed by attending to the fire in the wash area. Then one day the sheikh asked the janitor to go by the man who lives by the wash area after she has collected all the waste from the toilets, ensuring that he smells the waste matter. She carried out the sheikh's order. Abu Sáîd had lived a pampered life, so when she closely passed by and the foul smell of the waste reached him, he looked at her angrily and said, "How dare you pass by me with this rubbish?; you would have paid for it if this was Gangoh." The sheikh summoned the janitor and asked her what happened when she followed his order. She replied, "When I passed by him with the bucket of waste, he became very angry and told me that he would have severely punished me if this was Gangoh." "Hmm! It will take a lot more work; the rice hasn't softened yet," said the sheikh.

A few weeks later, the sheikh asked the janitor to do the same thing again, and to make sure this time that the waste bucket touches Abu Sáîd as she passes by him. She carried out the instructions and went back to the sheikh to report the incident. The sheikh asked her what happened this time. She said, "I did as you asked me sir; I made sure that the waste bucket rubbed him as I walked by him. He just looked at me angrily, but did not say anything." "We are getting there, Alhamdu-lillah," exclaimed the sheikh.

After another few weeks, the sheikh summoned the janitor and asked her to do the same thing once again, and to make sure that this time she deliberately dumps all the waste on him when she passes by him. Frightened she carried out the instructions and came back to the sheikh to report. "What happened?" asked the sheikh. "This time, sir, a strange thing happened. When I passed by him and dumped my waste bucket on him; not only that he was soiled with the waste

matter, but I also slipped and fell down. When I fell, he totally forgot about his soiled clothes, jumped on his feet and said, 'Are you alright? Are you hurt? Let me help you up.' He even helped me put the waste matter back into the bucket." "Alhamdu-lillah!" exclaimed the sheikh, "The arrogance is finally gone; praise and thanks be to Allah."
The sheikh called Abu Sáîd and promoted him from attending to the fire and living by the wash area back into the house. "Now you can live here in the house. Your job now is to look after the hunting dogs and accompany us on the hunts. Make sure you don't let the dogs run away," said the sheikh. So, one day the sheikh went for hunting. Abu Sáîd gathered the dogs and went with him. The sheikh was riding his horse, and Abu Sáîd was walking behind him holding the chains of the dogs. Suddenly, the dogs noticed an animal and took off after it. Abu Sáîd was trying very hard to hold them back, but they were big and strong and he had lost his strength and had become weak. He was having a hard time holding on to the chains, so he wrapped the chains around his body, but the dogs could not be held back. Abu Sáîd fell and was being dragged behind the dogs. He was bleeding as his body was badly scrapped on the rocks and stones.

During the night, Sheik Nizamudding Balakhi (ra) had a dream, in which his own sheikh, Abdul Quddûs Gangohi (ra), appeared and said to him, "Nizamudddin, we did not put you through such hardships when you came to Gangoh." In the morning, Sheikh Nizamuddin summoned Abu Sáîd, embraced him, and said, "There, the treasure that you came here for – the one that I had brought from you grandfather, is now all yours to take back. Your grandfather's inheritance has been returned to you. You may go home in peace now."

My beloved Sheikh Zakariya (ra) after mentioning this story writes:

Many such stories are well-known and have been recorded in the books of history. But, people nowadays are generally deteriorating in their physical as well as spiritual strength. Therefore, after Sheikh Thânvî (ra), the sheikhs have been using even softer ways of treatment and reform.

The Prophet (saw) once said to the companions:

You live in a time when you may be destroyed if you ignore even one-tenth of your religious obligations. But, a time shall come when one would receive salvation if he fulfills only one-tenth of his religious duties. (Mishkât)

Some scholars have interpreted 'religious obligations' to mean fulfilling the duty of enjoining all that is good and forbidding all that is bad and evil. In my opinion, the phrase is comprehensive and includes all religious obligations. And, destruction refers to the loss of the states of *khushú* [1] and *Ihsân*[2]. In a hadîth mentioned in Abu Dawûd, the Prophet (saw) said, "A person performs his salah and only one-tenth of the reward is awarded to him; and to some one-half." This is due to the loss of *khushú* and *Ihsân*. With time, people are becoming weaker in body and faith. This is why the sheikhs have softened their approach in putting the disciples through very hard work to treat their spiritual ailments. Similarly, the criteria and requirements of a sheikh have become relatively softer also.

Compatibility between the Sheikh and the Disciple

It is important to ensure natural compatibility between the sheikh and the disciple before one should make Baiáh, with-

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[1] The sense of fear and accountability before Allah (swt).

[2] The sense that one is in the presence of Allah and He is watching him.

out which one cannot fully benefit from the relationship. The Prophet (saw) has said:

عن ابي هريرة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه و سلم الارواح جنود مجندة ما تعارف منها ائتلف و ماتنا كر منها اختلف

Abu Hurairah (ra) narrated that the Prophet (saw) said, "There were armies of souls (in the spirit world); those who got to know each other there would have a natural affinity towards each other in this world, and those who did not get to know each other there would also be incompatible with each other here." (Muslim, Abu Dawûd)

It has been proven through experience that this natural compatibility between the sheikh and the disciple is a prerequisite to receive the spiritual blessings of the sheikh, which come largely through a loving relationship between the two, and which, in turn, depends upon the acquaintance of the souls in the spirit world according to this hadîth. Sometimes, it is because of this lack of compatibility that a sheikh sends a disciple to a different sheikh who he believes to be compatible with the disciple's nature.

The sign of such compatibility is that the disciple does not harbor any ill feelings towards the sheikh for anything he says or does, although intellectually he may disagree with the sheikh in some matters. They have a mutual liking for everything about each other. This deep mutual care indeed is the sign of compatibility.

It is, therefore, necessary to first establish compatibility with the sheikh, without which all efforts towards improvement are likely to fail. If one has already made Baiáh with a sheikh and finds a natural incompatibility with him, he must attempt to establish at least an intellectual compatibility with

the sheikh, as benefit from the sheikh is largely dependent upon mutual compatibility. The best approach is to ensure compatibility first, and when one finds his heart full of love and care for the sheikh, only then should he make the commitment of Baiáh.

The Company of Sheikh

Each human being is naturally influenced by his environment and the company he keeps. Allah (swt) has specifically asked the believers to stay in good company.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُواْ اتَّقُواْ اللّهَ وَكُونُواْ مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

O you who believe! Be mindful of (your accountability to) Allah and be with the true ones. (19:119)

In this verse, Allah (swt) commanded the believers to be mindful of their accountability to Him, and showed the way to accomplish it – by staying in the company of the truthful ones.

The Prophet (saw) said:

> The example of a good pious companion and an evil one is that of a person carrying musk and another blowing a pair of bellows (an iron-smith). The one who is carrying musk will either give you some perfume as a present or you will buy some from him, or at least you will enjoy its fragrance in his company; but the one who is blowing a pair of bellows – his company will either burn you or your clothes with the flying sparks, or you will get suffocated with the heat and smoke of his fire. (Bukhârî, Muslim)

In this respect, Shaikh Thânvî (ra) has quoted, in his writings, part of a hadîth pertaining to Hanzala (ra) and Abubakr (ra) who went to the Prophet (saw) worrying that they have become hypocrites. They said:

> Allah's Messenger, when we are in your company, we are reminded of the hellfire and the paradise as if we are seeing them with our own eyes, but whenever we go away from you and attend to our wives, children and business, much of these things go out of our minds. Thereupon Allah's Messenger (saw) said: By Him in whose hand is my life, if your state of mind remains the same as it is in my presence and you are always busy in the remembrance (of Allah), the angels will shake hands with you in your beds and in your paths but, Hanzala, there is a time (for everything). He said this three times. (Muslim, Tirmidhi)

When a disciple struggles hard to cleanse his heart and soul and they become enlightened, he may, at times, have some extraordinary experiences or visions (like Hanzala (ra) mentioned about seeing the paradise and the hell with his own eyes). Sometimes, such experiences and visions may occur as a result of being in the company of or listening to the speech of a true and pious sheikh as is evident from the above hadîth. However, such states of experience don't last long; they go away when one leaves the company, as the Prophet (saw) mentioned to Hanzala (ra).

The Necessity of Company

One of the major purposes of Baiáh is to gain such company so that the sheikh may guide through and protect from the dangers of the path. Regardless of whether one possesses knowledge himself or not, knowledge without the company of knowledgeable is often useless. One who is not a scholar himself, but stays in the company of the knowledgeable is

likely to improve better and faster than the person who is a scholar himself but without proper company. The companions of the Prophet (saw) were not all *úlamâ*[1], they acquired their knowledge and training mainly through the company of the Prophet (saw). None of the formally trained *úlamâ* could ever match the character and the heights of their spiritual training.

No one can become a scholar just by reading books, or a carpenter without the benefit of training in the company and supervision of an expert craftsman, or a calligrapher without being taught by the experts in the field of calligraphy. Without proper training one would not be able to even handle the tools of the trade properly.

The poet says:

> The company of the pious will make you pious;
> The company of the wicked will make you wicked;
> A short time in the company of the friends of Allah,
> Is better than a hundred years of sincere worship.
> The company of the pious for a short while,
> Is better then a hundred years of self-denial and worship.

What is meant here is the fact that sometimes in the company of an accomplished person one learns such a valuable lesson, or undergoes such an inner experience that becomes a key to success through out his life. It is these occasions that are meant in the phrase 'a short while' in the above verse. Although, such fortunate moments are few, but each company has the potential for them and, therefore, would be entirely beneficial. An example will clarify how such moments are better than a hundred years of worship. Suppose a person wins a hundred million dollars in a moment; he had nothing

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[1] Plural of the word Álim – a formally trained scholar

else in his possession before. Although, he has nothing else right now, but has what it takes – the money, to buy anything he likes, so potentially he has everything. Similarly, when one wins such a pearl of wisdom, or an enlightening inner experience in a moment, although he may not have many years of worships and good deeds yet, but he now has the potential to pray and perform good deeds in a way that would bring him rewards equal to a hundred years of worship. But, the condition for opening the doors of success is to make an effort – to use the key. If an effort was not made to put the key in the lock to open it, just having the key in itself would be of no value.

Without making an effort, there is no value in merely talking or feeling good about oneself. One should, therefore, not be too concerned about simply experiencing good thoughts and good feelings. The only dependable thing is making an effort to improve and to become pious; and the desire to make an effort is a blessing of Allah (swt), which normally only comes through pious company.

The Effects of Company

In the company of a sheikh, the disciple unwittingly adopts the character of the sheikh. The following is a beautiful parable describing this phenomenon. The poet says:

> Once in a bathing salon, I received some fragrant dust from a beloved friend.
> I asked it, "Are you musk or ambrosia? Your beautiful aroma is exhilarating."
> It responded, "I was merely dust once, but I stayed in the company of fragrant flowers for a long time; their aroma affected me and filled me with fragrance too. Otherwise, I am nothing more than plain dust."

The characteristic effects of a sheikh's company are:

1. His capabilities will be gradually transferred into the disciple.
2. Even if he is not perfected, the disciple will become fully aware of his weaknesses, which in itself is an important factor in continuing to improve.
3. The disciple will sub-consciously adopt the sheikh's character and habits, and will become strong, consistent and jubilant in his worship and remembrance of Allah (swt).
4. The sheikh will explain any unusual experiences the disciple may face on the way.
5. His speech, which often clarifies various issues that the disciples face, will help the disciple reflect upon and understand his own issues more clearly.
6. The disciple receives special blessings from a blessed sheikh and learns from the sheikh's ways of doing things.
7. Motivation to reform oneself is increased.
8. The disciple discovers his abilities and capabilities.
9. The company of those who love promotes love in the disciple.
10. Sheikhs are blessed by Allah (swt) because of their good deeds, which also makes their teachings blessed and very effective in treating the disciple.
11. When one keeps hearing good things over and over again, sooner or later it begins to influence the person. But, there is also a hidden benefit – when a disciple stays in the company of a sheikh regularly, it strengthens the ties of relationship. This results in two more benefits. One, the sheikh will pray for the disciple, and his supplications are more likely to be accepted by Allah (swt) due to his closeness with Him. In fact, the sheikh supplicates by the Will of Allah (swt), so his supplication for a disciple is a sign that Allah (swt) will also bless the disciple. Secondly, his love for the disciple will bring blessings in his efforts and good deeds, which, in turn, will bring im-

provement in his condition and success in his efforts more quickly.

12. Their hearts are enlightened by Allah (swt). Therefore, their company is enlightening for the disciple, and when there is light, darkness is diminished, doubts are removed, and every thing becomes more clear and visible. If the disciple bears a clean heart, even a short visit with the sheikh becomes sufficient; otherwise, longer stay in his company becomes necessary.

Chapter 4

Benefits of Baiáh

For the purpose of reforming oneself, making Baiáh with the pious servants of Allah (swt) has been a continuous tradition from the time of the Prophet (saw). It has numerous benefits, many of which have already been mentioned in the previous chapters. Some specific benefits are being mentioned here.

Sayyad Ahmed Shahîd (ra) states that when a person makes Baiáh with a chosen servant of Allah (swt), then the honor and dignity accorded to him in the majestic court of Allah (swt), supports the person who becomes his disciple. Allah's blessings begin to shower on the disciple as well and guard him in one of the two ways. If the sheikh is held in high regard by Allah (swt), and one of his disciple is about to fall in a pit of sinful activities, Allah (swt) informs the sheikh of the condition of his disciple and commands him to protect the disciple from falling into sins. The sheikh then determines ways to save his disciple. Or, sometimes Allah (swt) Himself protects the disciple through His angles who appear to him in the form of his sheikh, as was the case in the story of Prophet Yusuf (as) and Zulaikha.

Yusuf (as) was a slave in Zulaikha's house who was the wife of the Egyptian king's minister, Azîz. One day she tried to seduce Yusuf (as); she took him in a private room and closed all the doors to satisfy her carnal desires with him. Yusuf (as) avoided her, but she continued to insist and commanded him to comply with her wishes. Yusuf (as) was trapped and was under the risk of complying with her wishes, which would have been a major sin. At that juncture, Allah (swt) commanded angel Jibra'îl to salvage Yusuf (as). He suddenly appeared at the doorway in the form of his father,

Yáqûb (as), holding his finger between his teeth to warn him. In fact, Yáqûb (as) was far away; he had no knowledge of the incident. Yusuf (as) ran through the door straight into the minister who was just about to walk in. Thus, Allah (swt) protected Yusuf (as) from committing a major sin through angel Jibra'îl who appeared in the form of Yáqûb (as).

Numerous such incidents have been recorded in the books of saints. The following is one such example from the book *Tazkiratur Rashîd* by Sheikh Áshiq Eâhî (ra).

A sincere and pious disciple of Sheikh Rashîd Ahmad Gangohî (ra) used to live with him in his service. He used to lead prayers in a nearby masjid, and his meals were the responsibility of a local resident of Gangoh. Shaitân is always on the look out to lead the believers astray. Unfortunately, this man fell in love with a woman and their relationship advanced to the point where they decided to get together one night. The time and place for the meeting was agreed upon. No mention of this sinful arrangement could be made to anyone. So, no one knew how shaitân had planned to lead him astray from all the good work he was doing. On the night of the meeting, he looked after his sheikh's needs after the Isha prayer as usual and waited until he retired for the night. When he thought that the sheikh had fallen asleep, he quietly walked out. The sky was clear at the time, but as he walked towards the meeting place, the sky suddenly became overcast with dark clouds; the further he went the darker it got till he reached the side of the house where they were supposed to meet. The woman was waiting for him when he got there. But before they could talk or do anything else, there was such a loud thunder and lightning that both of them were terrified. The woman ran back to her house worried that she might get in trouble if her parents were awakened by the thunder and did not find her in the house. He also ran back knowing that the sheikh was sleeping in the open and would be awakened by the thunder and lightening, and might call

him for help since he always slept near the sheikh's bed to be available to him when he needed. So, he ran as fast as he could without fulfilling his desire with the woman. When he entered the house, the sky had become clear once again. He went in and quietly looked towards the sheikh's bed. He saw the sheikh sitting on the bed, head downcast, hands resting on the bed by his sides, in a meditative state. He quietly walked to his own bed nearby under a tree. When he laid down, the sheikh raised his head and went back to sleep as well. In the morning, without mentioning anything about the events of the previous night, the sheikh admonished him about the excellence of controlling one's baser desires when one is put to test. After listening to the sheikh's speech, his heart was so overwhelmed by shame and remorse, that he used to weep over that incident every time he recalled it, and sincerely begged Allah (swt) for forgiveness. Later, Allah (swt) blessed him with consistency and spiritual strength, and the sheikh honored him by appointing him as one of his deputies (*khalifah*), now capable of helping others; and he returned to his own family with that honor.

Such incidents have also been reported about the Prophet (saw), his companions, and in the biographies of the notable spiritual teachers. But, such unusual interventions and miracles are not a norm for all sheikhs, nor are they necessary for every disciple's treatment. In fact, many sheikhs and spiritual guides never display any miraculous performance. However, Baiáh and the company of a sheikh are always fruitful for all to various degrees. It is not necessary for a sheikh to be able to perform miracles. What is important is that he always lives within the bounds of shariáh and the sunnah of the Prophet (saw). This is what makes him a true spiritual leader, even if he never shows any miracles. On the other hand, a sheikh who performs all sorts of miracles, but his life is devoid of the shariáh and the sunnah, he is himself astray and would only lead those who follow him astray.

Clearing up some Misconceptions

When a true spiritual guide – a sheikh, is found and one intends to become his disciple, he should first understand his own reasons to do so, as people become disciples for many different reasons.

Some want to achieve miraculous powers, such as finding out the future and things not known to others. So, when such powers and miracles are not required of even a genuine sheikh, then how may a disciple acquire such powers?

Some believe that by becoming a disciple of an accomplished sheikh, they are guaranteed forgiveness and salvation on the Day of Judgment through the intercession of the sheikh. This is also totally incorrect. The Prophet (saw) warned his own daughter: يا فاطمة بنت محمد! أنقذي نفسك من النار - "O Fatimah! Save yourself from the hell fire (by doing good deeds)."

Some think that one glance from a sheikh will change them altogether without any labor or struggle on their part against their bad tendencies. If this would have been the case, then the sacrifices that the companions of the Prophet (saw) made for upholding Islam would not have been necessary. No one is more perfect than the Prophet (saw), but he also labored hard to establish Islam. In exceptional cases, someone might have been changed by a miraculous glance of a spiritual guide. But, miracles do not occur all the time, nor does every spiritual leader necessarily display miracles. It is a great mistake to become a disciple just for this reason.

Some think that becoming a disciple would give them a great fervor and enthusiasm in performing good deeds; that it will curb their sinful tendencies, and will eliminate the desire to commit sin altogether; and that they would automatically keep performing good deeds. Their hearts and minds would

then be free from all bad thoughts and they would become carefree from all that is around them. Although, this idea sounds better than the rest, but unfortunately this is also based on ignorance, because these are some mental and emotional states that, though desirable, are beyond the control of a disciple and not the main objective. The real object is to achieve something which is under one's control and sustainable. In fact, behind the desire of achieving these states is a deceit of *nafs* which prefers ease, enjoyment and fame. One, who is seeking to please Allah, would have nothing to do with such desires of *nafs*. His condition will reflect the meaning of the following verse of a poet.

Separation or union with him is unimportant;
I seek only the pleasure of my beloved.
It is despicable to ask him of something besides his pleasure.

If the good feelings have gone; it matters not,
As long as my relationship with him is in tact,
For there is nothing more desirable than a relationship with him.

Oh my heart! You are still delusional,
If you differentiate between joy and pain in love.

Such a person suffers double anguish, because either he will achieve these states or not. If he achieves some of these emotional and spiritual states, he may begin to consider himself enlightened and may become preoccupied with them, neglecting what is more important, that is, the efforts to achieve piety and consistency in the worship of Allah. He may no longer consider any such efforts necessary or important for him. On the other hand, if he is unable to achieve these states, he languishes in sorrow. Truly, any one who would desire for things that are beyond his control will always suffer from sorrow and grief.

Some believe that the sheikh knows charms and incantations or that his supplications are always granted by Allah (swt), and that they could get amulets and charms from him or ask him to make supplications for them to solve all their worldly problems, as if the sheikh is controlling the Will of Allah (swt) to grant all their wishes. Even better, they think that they may learn these charms and incantations from the sheikh and become saints themselves, so that their touch and breathe would also heal and cure others' sufferings. They consider such things a sign of being a saint. Unfortunately these things have nothing to do with sainthood, but only with worldly desires. Hence, it is a compound mistake.

And, some think that by engaging in the remembrance of Allah (swt) and other *sufi* practices over a period of time, they would be able to see the divine light and the angles and hear divine voices. None of which is necessary or desirable, and if someone does experience such things, they may only be delusions or illusions. Even if they were true experiences, what is to be gained from them except enjoyment? They will not make one any more pious, nor bring him closer to Allah (swt). Piety and closeness to Allah may only be achieved by obeying and worshipping Him sincerely. Sometimes even the shaitâns may see the angels, but they remain shaitâns.

Therefore, all such ideas should be discarded. The real aim of a disciple should be to seek the pleasure of Allah by obeying Him and keeping His remembrance alive in his heart. This is what the sheikh teaches and what the disciple must learn and practice regardless of whether any extra-ordinary spiritual or emotional states ensue from it. The real advantage of remembering Allah and obeying His commands is the achievement of His pleasure, salvation in the life hereafter, and entry into paradise wherein there will be plenty of divine visions of Allah (swt) for his beloved servants.

Another Advantage of Baiáh

Another advantage of Baiáh that has been quoted from Sheikh Abdul Ha'i Árifî (ra) by Sheikh Muhammad Rafî Úsmânî (ra), is as follows.

An authentic scholar of hadîth is the one who has learned it from an authentic teacher and then has been given permission to narrate it further. This is how we have received the ahadîth from the Prophet (saw). When a teacher relates a hadîth, he also explains its authenticity based on the chain of narrators starting from himself all the way to the Prophet (saw). When the student is given permission to narrate the hadîth further, he also becomes part of the chain of the narrators for that hadîth, which is considered a great honor and blessing because it connects the narrator all the way to the teachings of the beloved Prophet (saw). That is why, students and even teachers of hadîth used to travel long distances to visit well-known scholars of hadîth in order to learn, be tested, and receive permission to narrate the ahadîth further.

Similarly, the authority to obtain Baiáh goes all the way back to the Prophet (saw). Thus, by making Baiáh with an authentic sheikh one becomes a link in the chain of all the sheikhs who have been receiving permission to obtain Baiáh through their sheikhs all the way to the Prophet (saw). The disciple, thus, enters into a special relationship and benefits from the blessings and enlightenment of all the pious sheikhs in the chain including the Prophet (saw). This makes his struggles to traverse this path easier, and brings him to his destination quicker with a minimum effort.

A simple example would make it more clear and easy to understand. A light bulb which is screwed into a local power outlet is receiving energy from the house power, which in turn is connected to a series of power poles all the way to the

power station. The electricity is generated at the power house and reaches all the small and large bulbs in the house through these cables and poles. Similarly, the spiritual energy commences from the Prophet (saw) and enlightens the hearts of all those who attach themselves to a chain of the pious people connected with the source – the Prophet (saw). These connections are established through Baiáh with an authentic sheikh who belongs to an authentic chain of sheikhs going all the way back to the Prophet (saw). This connection then brings the enlightenment and blessings of the Prophet (saw) into the heart and the life of the disciple provided that his desire and efforts are true and sincere, and he keeps his sheikh informed of his true condition and dutifully follows the treatment regimen prescribed by his sheikh.

Chapter 5

After Sheikh's Demise

Some disciples have not yet reached their goals and destination and their sheikh passes away. Among them, some continue their spiritual journey by attaching themselves to other sheikhs and others do not; they never finish their journey and do not reach their destination.

As has been mentioned before, Shah Wali-ullah (ra) has described many kinds of the Baiáh, among which is the *Baiáti Tarîqat* and its three sub-categories: 1) Baiáh for repentance (2) Baiáh for blessing or benediction, and (3) Baiáh with a firm determination to traverse the spiritual path of reforming one's inner self and to achieve closeness of Allah (swt). This third category is known as the path of *sulûk* in sufî terminology; and the person walking this path is called a *sâlik*. A sâlik may fall into three categories, the beginner (*mubtadî*), the intermediate (*mutawassit*), and the accomplished (*muntahî*). Until the sâlik becomes accomplished himself, he continues to need an accomplished sheikh to guide him. It is said in sûfî tradition, "A person who has no guide, his guide is shaitân."

If the doctor dies in the course of treatment of a physical disease, one needs to consult with another doctor. Similarly, for the treatment of spiritual diseases, it is necessary to have a living sheikh until one is cured. Naturally, after a disease has been properly treated and cured, one does not continue to need the doctor.

Some people erroneously believe that the influence of their sheikh continues even after his death, hence they do not need to consult with another sheikh. This is true only for those who have completed their treatment and training. But, those

who are still on the way do need a living guide. The treatment and guidance can only be provided by the living.

Sayyad Ahmad Shahîd (ra) writes:

> Know that for the pious servants of Allah (swt), death is a bridge which brings them to their beloved friend, and thereafter they are rewarded with such rewards and knowledge that few among the living could ever receive. In this sense they may be considered living, but for the purpose of this material world they are indeed dead. They no longer have the capability and the control that the living of this world possess. If they could possess such powers and ability to influence and guide the living, all people would have gone to the grave of the Prophet (saw) in Madinah to be guided, and the whole system of teaching, training and guiding the living would become useless. Hence, by the divine nature, training and enlightenment has always been through the living for the living. (Sirati Mustaqîm)

Therefore, a disciple whose sheikh has died without giving him permission to take Baiáh from others, or if a conditional permission was given, he should seek another living sheikh to complete his training and treatment. If his late sheikh had asked him to consult someone specific in case of his death, then he should go to that person. If the sheikh had not suggested anyone in particular, then the disciple should select any one from the sheikh's deputies (*khalifahs*), or someone else who is compatible with his sheikh's beliefs, teaching and treatment style to complete his spiritual journey.

Some do want to seek a replacement, but make the mistake of looking for the same qualities and characteristics as that of their late sheikh; if they do not find someone that meets these criteria, they do not submit themselves to anyone else. Since

a person cannot stay stagnant for too long – either they would continue to grow or begin to deteriorate. And, since their progress has stopped, they begin to deteriorate without even realizing it.

Sheikh Zakariya (ra) writes:

> An important warning is that those who had been in the company of great sheikhs and benefited from their company and training, suffer from great deprivation after their death. This is because they try to compare other living sheikhs with the traits and characteristics of those who passed on. This is a great mistake that deprives them from receiving the potential benefits of the living sheikhs.

Hence, the most important warning, advice, and admonishment to those who are attached to me, is that they should not compare the living sheikhs with those who passed away. They should remember that when the present ones pass on, even their equal will be difficult to find. Clearly, the companions of the Prophet (saw) were not all exactly like him; and those who followed the companions did not possess all the qualities and characteristics of the companion, so on and so forth. It is, therefore, an injustice to ones own self to search for the qualities and traits of the departed in those who are living. The Prophet (saw) has said:

لا يأتى عليكم عامٌ الا الذى بعده شرٌ منه

> *No time will come upon you, but the time following it will be worse than it.* (Bukhârî)

Regardless of whether he is famous and highly accomplished or not, one important factor in selecting a sheikh is to ensure that not only he meets all the requirements mentioned before

for a sheikh, but that he is also compatible with the personality of the disciple. It should also be easy and convenient to visit him to benefit from his company. Some people seek a well-known and highly accomplished sheikh to make Baiáh whether they have compatibility with him or not and whether they can easily avail his company. There are many examples of people who, in the presence of a highly accomplished and popular sheikh, chose to make Baiáh with someone who was not as well-known or as accomplished simply because of compatibility and closeness. For example, Sheikh Abdul Qâdir Raipurî (ra), in the presence of a well known sheikh and great scholar, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad Gangohî (ra), made Baiáh with one of his deputies, Sheikh Abdul Rahîm Raipurî (ra). Similarly, during the life-time of Haji Imdadullah Makki (ra), Sheikh Khalîl Ahmad Saharanpurî (ra), Shaikhul Hind Mahmoodul Hasan (ra) and others chose to become the disciples of Haji Imdadullah's deputy Sheikh Rashîd Ahmad Gangohî (ra). And, there are many other such examples where some people became disciples of sheikhs of lower caliber and Allah (swt) blessed them with very high spiritual status. In fact, Allah (swt) is the absolute guide; all others are merely means to the end, provided by Him.

Some ignorant people make the error of making Baiáh with more than one sheikh at a time. This is against the principle and may be harmful. There should be only one sheikh and guide at a time, and one must not make Baiáh with another in the life-time of his present sheikh provided that he is an authentic sheikh who meets all the criteria and lives by the shariáh and the Sunnah of the Prophet (saw).

Praise be to Allah that by His grace most of the necessary things connected with the Baiáh have been explained. The knowledgeable readers are requested to please inform me of any errors that might have been left in this booklet, so that they may be rectified in the next revision.

وآخر دعوانا ان الحمد لله رب العالمين

و صلى الله تبارك و تعالـــٰى علـــٰى خير خلقه سيدنا و مولانا محمد

و آله و صحبه و اتباعه اجمعين

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